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OBITUARIES

R.E. Cushman, Retired Marine General, Dies

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Robert E. Cushman Jr., 70, a retired Marine Corps general who was one of the most highly decorated combat veterans of World War II and was a deputy director of the CIA before serving as Marine Corps commandant from 1972 to 1975, died Jan. 2 at his home in Fort Washington after a heart attack.

Gen. Cushman spent 40 years on active duty. Decorations he won during World War II included the Navy Cross, the Corps' highest award for valor except for the Medal of Honor, which he received as a battalion commander on Guam.

Serving in Vietnam from 1967 to 1969, he rose to the post of commanding general of the III Marine Amphibious Force. Comprising some 163,000 soldiers and marines, it was the largest combined combat unit ever led by a marine.

From 1957 to 1960, he was assistant for national security affairs to Vice President Richard M. Nixon.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, Gen. Cushman held the rank of captain and was commander of the Marine detachment aboard the battleship Pennsylvania at Pearl. With his ship out of action as a result of the Japanese attack, Gen. Cushman returned to the mainland, then in January 1943 embarked for the Pacific, where he commanded the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, and became a lieutenant colonel.

During the next two years, he led his battalion through some of the roughest fighting of the Pacific war. Gen. Cushman earned the Bronze Star with combat "v" device at Bougainville, the Legion of Merit with combat "v" at Iwo Jima, and the Navy Cross during the recapture of Guam.

At Guam, his battalion was ordered to seize and hold a strongly defended enemy strongpoint, which had held up the Marine advance for three days.

The citation for his award described how Gen. Cushman "directed the attacks of his battalion and the repulse of numerous Japanese counterattacks, fearlessly exposing himself to heavy hostile rifle, machine gun and mortar fire in order to remain in the front lines and obtain firsthand knowledge of the enemy situation. Following three days of bitter fighting culminating in a heavy Japanese counterattack, which pushed back the flank of his battalion, he personally led a platoon into the gap and, placing it for defense, repelled the hostile force. He contributed to the annihilation of one enemy battalion and the rout of another."

After the war, he held a variety of staff and training posts, including instructor of the command and staff school and head of the amphibious warfare branch of the Navy Department's Naval Research Office. During the 1950s, his assignments included a stint as an instructor at the Armed Forces Staff College.

From 1962 to 1964, he served as assistant chief of staff for intelligence and for plans, operations, and training. From 1964 to 1967, he was stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., as base commander and head of the 5th Division.

He then went to Vietnam, where he earned two Distinguished Service medals and gained a reputation for independence and tactical innovation. Commanding in South Vietnam's northernmost provinces, he privately took issue with his commanders' instructions from Saigon, especially about the defense of the

American bastion at Khesanh, which was besieged by the enemy for months. Gen. Cushman was believed to have said that Americans were sacrificing their greatest asset: the ability to fight mobile warfare, to strike rapidly with mobile artillery, helicopters and specially organized troops.

He returned to the United States in 1969 to become deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, number two post, which he held until 1972 when he became the 25th commandant of the Marine Corps. He was awarded the CIA's Distinguished Intelligence Medal, and upon retiring from the Corps in 1975 was awarded a third Distinguished Service Medal.

Robert Everton Cushman Jr. was born Dec. 24, 1914, in St. Paul. He graduated 10th in his class of 442 from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1935. Before World War II, he was a platoon commander with the 4th Marines and later with the 2nd Marine Brigade in China.

Survivors include his wife, the former Audrey Boyce of Fort Washington; a son, Robert E. III, of Arlington; a daughter, Roberta Lind Cauley of Charlottesville, and a sister, Helen Cushman of California.



ROBERT E. CUSHMAN JR.